

Sometimes, even in the dryest and most unpromising circumstances, one may find, if he looks and can see it, a blessed ray of humor that relieves the gloom. For some reason or other, the American Telephone and Telegraph Co. (the Bell System), sent us a copy of their annual report for the year 1911. It is, in more ways than one, an interesting document. The corporation is a dainty little one with only \$1,186,639,036 capital stock! The gross revenue collected from the public in 1911 was only \$179,500,000 exclusive of the revenue from independent companies. And on that small sum it had to worry along! Speaking of possible government ownership, the report says: "Even if the final conclusion should favor government purchase of all wire plants, there would be no unfavorable consequences to the shareholders of the wire companies other than the obligatory liquidation. Any possible award for the property which the security holders would be obliged to accept would give them better than current prices for their securities." Which means that the government would have to pay more for the shares than they would fetch in the open market; of course!

Last April, William F. Boos, L. H. Newburgh and H. K. Marks published an article in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* which purported to be a study of digitalis leaves and their preparations and the variation in strength thereof. The article may or may not have a great deal of intrinsic merit; with that we have nothing to do in this present item. What we object to is this: A short time after the article appeared, the JOURNAL received what appeared to be a typewritten abstract of it, with a typewritten letter giving the impression that the article had been abstracted for this JOURNAL and for the good of the medical profession and humanity. It was, in fact, nothing but a carefully worked up scheme to get "reading notices" into journals that would not print them as such. This JOURNAL printed the abstract in good faith, not realizing that it was a shady scheme to get a reading notice of "digipuratum" into print. When supposedly respectable manufacturers will resort to questionable methods like this in order to gain publicity, what is one to do? Twice in ten years the JOURNAL has thus been "worked" to publish a "reading notice." That is not such a bad record, but we will try and see that it does not happen for at least another ten years. And there are probably better preparations of digitalis leaves than "digipuratum," anyhow.

Quite a number of our readers have asked for information in regard to why we class certain preparations as "nostrums" and deplore the fact that they still receive recognition from certain physicians and are still advertised in certain medical (?) journals. There may be a number of reasons, but two are sufficient as they divide all proprietary preparations (except those approved by the Council, which, of course, are in quite a different case) into two general classes. Firstly, the mixture is in itself worthless or is composed of some simple ingredients and its only claim is the mystery surrounding it. Secondly, the mixture may be, in itself, a good combination of drugs but it has been so extolled, so lied about with intent to deceive physicians into believing that it is much more valuable than it really is, that it is a disgrace to our profession to give it any recognition. To take a few examples that have been mentioned: "H-m-c" tablets are claimed to contain "cactine" and for "cactine" most wonderful claims were made to the effect that it was a powerful heart stimulant and entirely altered the medicinal action of hyocin and morphine when in combination with those potent drugs. The Council on Pharmacy and Chemistry had "cactine" very carefully examined and the most competent experts in the country declared it to be inert. Obviously, then, the manufacturer was claiming for this preparation some qualities that it did not possess; his statements were not in accord with facts. A physician, believing him, might be led into serious error, to the injury of his patient. This is a common fault with a number of nostrums; they claim properties for some ingredient that it does not possess and the physician who uses it is deceived. For another example, take the case of "glycothymoline"; if you want to see a good example of unlimited nerve, just look at the label on one of their bottles and read one of the booklets they issue in the package containing the bottle. It is recommended to alleviate or cure nearly everything from abscesses to whooping cough. The label on the bottle gives a list of conditions for which it is recommended that is only limited in extent by the possible size of the label. For another example, consider peptomangan, and in considering it, go back to the files of the *Journal A. M. A.* and read there the exposure of the fraudulent claims made for this simple iron preparation. Lies, lies, lies. When one observes how easy the game is, one is tempted to believe that physicians really like to be lied to. They certainly are awfully "easy"!